

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

October 17, 2022

Location

Kate Waller Barrett branch; Local History/Special Collections

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder, Canek Aguirre, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Karen Marshall, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Labra.

The meeting was called to order at 4:03pm.

Public Comment

Arlington resident Bobbie Fisher stated that on a previous visit to the Kate Waller Barrett branch, a tree branch fell onto her car and destroyed it. Ms. Fisher stated that the City and Library refuse to pay \$7,000 to repair her car. Ms. Fisher stated that no one is listening to her after a year and a half of trying.

Presentation

Patricia Walker, Local History/Special Collections Branch Manager, showed a recap video of the Alexandria Library Company Internship program. Ms. Schloeder asked how the intern was chosen. Ms. Walker explained the application process and Director Dawson added that it was restricted to students. Ms. Marshall requested a copy of the presentation.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Schloeder to approve the September 19, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and was passed unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn stated that the Board is looking for two new members to replace Ms. Schloeder and Ms. Marshall by January. Both positions are appointed by City Council. Chair Hahn stated that she hopes for a diverse field of candidates who have a passion for libraries and public service. Chair Hahn complimented the planting party at Burke Branch and asked Ms. Schloeder, who attended, to provide a summary. Ms. Schloeder complimented Branch Manager Genelle Schuler on the event and for coordinating with Greenstreet Gardens, who provided the native shrubs at a deep discount. Chair Hahn stated that she drafted a thank you letter.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that while the Federal government ended its distribution of free test kits, the Library continues to distribute free COVID-19 test kits and distributed 3,505 kits in September. In addition, she reported the following monthly statistics as of August 31, 2022:

- Patron count is up (59%); circulation is up (5%)
- E-borrowing has dropped (-6.45%) with a noticeable decline (-13%) in the use of e-material
- Wi-Fi usage is up (35%), but desktop usage is only at 31%
- Passport services have increased but remain below pre-pandemic levels
- 63 hotspots were checked out and 34 were renewed
- 34 Chromebooks were checked out and 48 were renewed

Director Dawson reported on the Library budget. The Library requested that two projects (including the Microsoft 365 implementation) be funded with City FY22 carryover funding, although both were denied. Director Dawson explained that the City Manager limited funding to “true” carryover projects – those which had been started in the prior fiscal year. Director Dawson said the Library intends to re-submit the project in the upcoming budget process. Councilmember Aguirre and Mr. Ray expressed concern that the Library is “cut off” and excluded from the City’s communication systems. Chair Hahn asked about the timing of supplemental budget requests and Director Dawson stated that they are due on November 7.

Director Dawson reported that Linda Wesson continues to serve as a contract HR Manager in the short term. Director Dawson reported that Law Library Manager Allison Gifford has resigned. Each branch is taking responsibility to cover operations for one day of the week until the vacancy is filled. In addition, the hours of operation are being temporarily changed from 9am – 2pm to 9am – 1pm. E-Notary service is suspended until a permanent hire is made.

Director Dawson reported that the Library is participating in the City’s ARISE guaranteed income program. Beatley Central Branch Manager Diana Price previously commented to Director Dawson that the high income threshold for a one-person household to participate in the program is \$49,850 and that the entry salary for a Reference Librarian I, which requires a master’s degree, would qualify that staff member for the guaranteed income program. Ms. Marshall asked how Library salaries compare to other jurisdictions. Director Dawson stated that Alexandria is lower than many, but consistent with Fairfax. Deputy Director Labra said we are about 10% lower than Prince George’s County, and that their salaries will be going up.

Director Dawson reported that phase two of the Beatley parking lot project is ongoing and should be completed by next Wednesday. There was a leak in the Duncan children’s book area and some materials were damaged.

Director Dawson reported that the Burke community planting event was a huge success. Chair Hahn asked for other ways to acknowledge Greenstreet Gardens. Ms. Schloeder said that they were offered an opportunity to put up a sign with the company name.

Director Dawson reported on Paws in the Park, stating that the Library Foundation sponsored the stage. More than 3,000 people attended, including City officials. She also reported on the upcoming For Love of Country event on Sunday at 2pm.

Director Dawson reported that she was able to travel along with other participants in the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP) pilgrimage to Montgomery and Selma, Alabama. The group delivered soil in remembrance of lynching victims, Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas. Director Dawson stated that it was a powerful experience.

Treasurer’s Report

Ms. Marshall reported that as of August 31, 2022, the Library is 16.7% of the way through the fiscal year and has expended 15.4% of the budget. 65.1% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. The Library has collected \$31,435.62 or 15% of its requirement of \$210,000 in fees revenue.

Old Business – FY24 Budget

Director Dawson reported that the City Manager had asked for budget priorities from the Board and stated that the Library Board’s current submission remained sufficient.

Old Business – Election of Officers

Ms. Schloeder moved that Oscar Fitzgerald become Treasurer upon the departure of the current Treasurer, Karen Marshall. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ray. The motion was passed unanimously, although Mr. Fitzgerald abstained.

New Business – FY22 Audit

Director Dawson reported that the Library had received the FY22 Audit and there were no findings. Director Dawson commended Laura Gates, the new Administrative Services Division Chief, for conducting her first audit for the Library with no findings.

Adjournment

Ms. Schloeder made a motion to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and approved unanimously at 5:09pm.